

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

March 2, 2004

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chairperson, D. Chambers.

MEMBERS PRESENT: D. Chambers, J. Hilt, L. Spataro, A. Medema, T. Bosma, T. Russo

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: B. Lazor, H.Griffith

OTHERS PRESENT: B. Grabinski, Director of Housing Inspections; B. Burns, Muskegon Chronicle; T. Macallister, 458 W Webster; B. Seeback, 475 W Western.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of January 6, 2004 was made by L. Spataro, supported by A. Medema and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS/PUBLIC HEARINGS

Case 2004-03: Request to Concur with the HBA for Demolition of a Dangerous Building. Applicant: Robert Grabinski; 593 W. Western; District: Clay Western; Class: AA. B. Lazor presented the staff report. The applicant wishes the HDC would concur with the HBA that the structure located at 593 W. Western (Muskegon Hotel) is unsafe, substandard, a public nuisance and dangerous building. A dangerous building inspection was conducted 11/10/03. A notice to repair or demolish was issued 11/10/03. The case was brought before the HDB on 1/8/04. The structure was declared substandard, a public nuisance and dangerous building. Please see supplied documentation. In light of the fact that the building has been deemed unsafe, substandard, a public nuisance and dangerous building, staff would recommend approval.

B. Grabinski stated that the front façade is stable. The City had done this in '97 or '98. Portions of the roof are caving in. There is a liability to the City if someone were to enter the building and be hurt because the City is aware of the conditions. Westwood is trying to sell the property. Should the HDC concur with the HBA, hopefully this will put pressure on Westwood to sell the property. A. Medema asked how this building was connected to the surrounding buildings. B. Grabinski stated that there is a party wall. They had a similar situation with a demolition and they stabilized the wall so the demolition could proceed. They would investigate this further prior to demolition and make any necessary stabilizations. A. Medema asked what would happen if the structure

were demolished and there is a vacant lot. B. Grabinski stated that it would have top soil and seed. This would become a grassy area. The owner would be responsible for the maintenance of the lot. Should the owner not take care of it, then the Environmental Inspectors will have the contractor do it and bill the property owner. L. Spataro asked B. Grabinski to explain the process if they were to concur with the HBA. B. Grabinski explained the process. The City Commission would need to concur and then the owner would be notified. The owner would have 21 days to appeal the decision to the Circuit Court. If this occurs, then the City would enter into a consent agreement. He isn't sure what the owner would do. T. Bosma stated that when the façade was enforced, he wasn't sure how it was done. He asked what would be there should the back of the structure be demolished. B. Grabinski stated that it would need to be looked at to determine what else would need to be done in order to save the façade. This would require an engineer to look at it. D. Chambers asked if there had been anyone interested in purchasing the property. B. Grabinski stated that he hadn't heard of any. He spoke to a contractor and referred them to Westwood. L. Spataro stated that he had also spoken to someone and referred them to Westwood. Westwood would need to sell it at a price that would allow for the new owner to rehabilitate what's left of the building. He explained Westwood's financial situation with the National City site. They had lost the property in a Sheriff's auction about a month ago. They have 90 day redemption period. He would like to see the HDC concur with the HBA. This may put pressure on Westwood to sell the property at a reasonable price. T. Macallister stated that he would concur with Mr. Grabinski for the back portion of the building. He would like to see the façade saved. This would help keep the streetscape that this area is known for. He also understood the need to put pressure on the owner. He will also bring this up to the Heritage Association to see if there is anything that they could do to help save the façade. B. Seebach stated that he is concerned with the demolition of this structure. There has been a lot of rehabilitation going on in this area. He named off the Depot, the Amazon, the Eagles as well as the building next to the Eagles. There is also plans for the Mall site. Many people may not know that this building is for sale. He suggested getting the word out that it is for sale. He is opposed to the demolition of the building.

L. Spataro stated that there are too many critical areas that have owners that don't have the vision to develop the properties, this being an example. This is a major blight as it is. A. Medema stated that she would like to see the façade saved at least. T. Bosma stated that this is a tough issue. He doesn't want to see it completely gone. From a safety aspect, he would concur that it is not safe. He would also like the façade saved. B. Grabinski stated that they would have an engineer look at it. The Inspections Department deals with skilled demolition contractors. He would try to save the façade if it is a condition. The commission members discussed saving the façade. L. Spataro stated that Westwood working at a financial loss if the demolition occurs. He stated that it this does go before the City Commission for concurrence, then he would do his best to free up funds to at least dismantle the façade so it may be possible to be reused by a developer.

A motion that HDC concur with the HBA, that the structure located at 593 W. Western is unsafe, substandard, a public nuisance and dangerous building, was made by L. Spataro, supported by T. Russo and approved with A. Medema voting nay.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

OTHER

L. Spataro gave the commission members an update on the Boilerworks project. He stated that there would be 26 units of housing. There would be no retail space or secondary uses. The housing is proposed to be build with MSHDA financing. Seven of the units will be with the 30% average mean with an income of \$7 to 8 thousand a year. The rest would fall under the 50% mean with an income of \$12,000 per year. The City Commission isn't interested in this type of proposal. As new projects open up, old ones fail. Community Mental Health has been studying housing. They have done a market study. Mental Health participants don't generally like to live in these large facilities.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 4:43 p.m.